

# 648 AERO SQUADRON

## MISSION

## LINEAGE

129 Aero Squadron (Supply) organized Sep 1917  
Redesignated 648 Aero Squadron (Supply), Feb 1918  
Demobilized, Jun 1919

## STATIONS

Kelly Field, TX  
Waco, TX, Dec 1917  
Port of Embarkation, Newport News, VA, Mar 1918  
AEF, Mar 1918  
Mitchel Field, NY

## ASSIGNMENTS

## COMMANDERS

## HONORS

**Service Streamers**

**Campaign Streamers**

**Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

**Decorations**

## EMBLEM

## MOTTO

## NICKNAME

## **OPERATIONS**

On September 5, 1917, the 648th Aero Supply Squadron was organized at Kelly Field, South San Antonio, Texas, and at that time was designated as the 129th Aero Supply Squadron. The enlisted personnel numbered 150 men, composed of 4 soldiers from the Regular Army, 136 recruits from Fort George Wright, Washington, and ten recruits from Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia.

During the first three weeks of its existence, the Squadron was without an officer, and cadets, who were awaiting their commissions, were in command. The organization was assigned to a provisional battalion under the command of Captain Julian C. Smith. On the 27th of September, 1st Lt Harry Robertson was placed in command. Lieut. Robertson came into the army with a national reputation as a singer, and at the time of his enlistment he gave up a \$35,000 a year contract with the Columbia Graphphone Company. He remained in command until November 23, 1917, when he was relieved by 2nd Lieut. James F. Reeves. Lieut. Reeves remained in command until December 24th, 1917, being relieved by 1st. Lieut. Arthur H. Smith, who was commissioned from the 1st. Battery, Leon Springs Training Camp. Three days after Lieut Smith assumed command, the Squadron moved to Aviation Camp, Waco, Texas. This camp was in the course of construction, and the Squadron aided materially in completing the work already begun, 1st. Lieut Frank E. Crimmins, commissioned at the same time and from the same organization as Lieut. Smith, relieved the latter on January 25th, 1918.

Orders were issued on January 28th, 1918 for the Squadron to proceed within 24 hours to the Aeronautical Supply and General Concentration Camp, Morrison, Va. The Squadron moved by special train, leaving Waco, Texas, at 5 P. M. January 29th, 1918, arriving at the new station at 10 P. M. February 1, 1918. On this date the number of the organization was changed from the 129th to the 648th.

From the date of its arrival in Morrison, the Squadron was held in readiness to leave for overseas duty. Finally on March 29, 1918 orders were received to proceed by train to the Port of Embarkation, Newport, News, Va., and there embark for France. A special train carrying the 648th, 649th and 650th left the camp at Morrison, Va., on the morning of March 29th, and on that same day they embarked on the U. S. Auxiliary Cruiser De Kalb. This ship was the famous German raider "Prinz Eitel Friederich", which during the early months of the war committed vast depredations to Allied Shipping.

British warships finally drove this "Pirate" ship into a U. S. port, where she was interned. At the declaration of war by the United States against Germany this ship was easily converted into an auxiliary cruiser, with a small capacity for carrying troops. The voyage lasted for 15 days, and on April 13th, 1918 the Squadron disembarked at the Port of St. Nazaire, France, under the command of 1st Lieut Frank E. Crimmins. The other officers of the Squadron were 1st. Lieutenants W. H. Parker, and M. L. Turney, Second Lieutenants B. W. George, W. H. Euchner, J. L. Devitt and S. P. Savage.

After remaining for 5 days in a rest camp at St. Nazaire, the Squadron was order to Colombey les Belles, arriving there after three day trip by train. The enlisted men were transported in box

ears and the officers in 3rd class passenger coaches. The organization was detained at Barizey la Cote, and marched from that station to Colombey la Belles, a distance of 10 kilometers. It was a cold, rainy day, and along the march the low rumble of the distant guns could be heard. When the organization was halfway to its destination, a courier from the 1st. Air Depot came for the Commanding Officer of the Squadron with orders for him to ride back and report immediately to the Commanding Officer of the camp. Upon reporting there he received orders dividing the Squadron into three flights.

Flight "A" was ordered to the 1st. Day Bombardment Group (then the 1st. Corps Observation Training Centre) at Amanty; Flight "B" was assigned to duty with the 1st. Observation Corps, and Flight "C" remained at the 1st. Air Depot, as did the headquarters of the Squadron. On April 29th, 1918 the headquarters were moved to Amanty, and a week later Flight "C" reported at the 1st. Pursuit Group for duty. It is a noteworthy fact that the three flights of this Squadron did the headquarters work of the first three United States Aviation Groups at the front.

The 648th Aero Supply Squadron contributed no small share in the excellent work done at the front by the United States Air Service, and while the Squadron possessed no planes or fliers, it made it possible for the combatant squadrons to operate efficiently. The Squadron was a pioneer in the work of furnishing headquarters flights for the groups at the front, and the honor and glory won by those units is shared by the 648th.

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Air Force Lineage and Honors

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Sources

*US Army Order of Battle 1919-1941*. Steven E. Clay. Combat Studies Institute Press. US Army Combined Arms Center. Fort Leavenworth, KS. Nd.